

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, June 26th, 2022, Third Sunday after Pentecost
2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14, Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20, Galatians 5:1, 13-25, Luke 9:51-62

Jesus at various times calls on his followers, those listening to him to follow him. Today we hear about two people Jesus says to follow him, but they have a reason not to. He tells them not to look back, one says let me bury my father first and the other says let me go and say goodbye to my family.

In another place, at another time, Jesus talks about divisions in the family. *Luke 12:49-56* And yet on another occasion, Jesus tells the man cleansed of evil spirits, evil spirits sent into the pigs, not to follow him but to go home and let the people know what Jesus has done for him. *Mark 5: 1-20*

Now I'm confused. Do we go home, or do we leave family to follow Jesus?
Some thoughts come to mind:

The value of family

The connection to community

Joy and hope

Draw the circle wider

Include the Samaritans and family together.

Moving from the comfortable to the uncomfortable. It's also not linear we don't follow in a straight line, but not taking the easy way out necessarily.

Maybe this has more to do with connection rather than competition. The idea that some people feel they must choose between family and God. Maybe it begins with the realization that the blessings, the family the relationships that we have that nourish us ultimately come from God. That all our other relationships are extensions of our relationship with God.

Then is it about family talking us out of what God is calling us to do and to be? Two personal examples come to mind. When I was an undergraduate at Bishop's University in Quebec, the covenant players came to see us through the chaplain's office. Covenant players is a Christian group of actors who present plays with a

spiritual theological theme. At the time they had groups in various parts of North America. I had considered joining them, and I mentioned it to my mother who talked me out of it. I think she had a fear this group was a cult. I did not pursue this. When I was in Sudbury working at the bank, and my parents were with my brother at his timeshare in Barbados, I resigned from the bank and that fall I entered theology school to become a priest.

Does this mean the first time I looked back to family to consult with them and the second time I did not?

I have often quoted Søren Kierkegaard, in saying; we live our lives forward but understand them backward.

We often look back at our lives and see God's hand in our lives moving forward.

I know becoming a priest was the right decision with God's hand involved, but did I miss an opportunity by rejecting the idea of joining the covenant players?

Then again, maybe if I really felt joining covenant players was the right decision, I wouldn't have let my mother talk me out of it.

Maybe that's the message. We have a relationship with loved ones with family which is very important. Consulting with them is an integral part of the decision-making process, but ultimately the decision is ours or between us and God and family has our best interest at heart.

Amen

May the Father from whom every family
in earth and heaven receives its name
strengthen you with his Spirit in your inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;
and the blessing ...